



## OUR MISSION -

*“To ensure the preservation of the character and biological biodiversity of Wagner Natural Area for Educational, Scientific and Research purposes.”*

# Friends of the Fen

## WAGNER NATURAL AREA SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Summer has officially arrived at the Wagner Natural Area. Pictured right is Wagner on a foggy early morning at sunrise.

Photo by Sydney Cantu



### Upcoming Events:

#### Summer Weed Pull:

**Missed June’s Weed Pull weekend? No problem, we have more dates in July to help out!**

**What:** Volunteers to help in the mechanical removal of invasive weed species within the natural area.

**When:** Saturday, July 9<sup>th</sup> & Sunday, July 10<sup>th</sup> from 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

**Where:** Meet at the Wagner Natural Area Parking lot. Please RSVP first to [info@wagnerfen.ca](mailto:info@wagnerfen.ca). Visit the website for more information.

Visit our website:

<http://wagnerfen.ca/>

For more information on upcoming events at Wagner Natural Area.

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All newsletter stories, unless otherwise noted, were prepared by Sydney Cantu, WNAS summer student.

# EDUCATION:

## May Orchid Walk

Thank you to everyone who came out on June 19<sup>th</sup> for Wagner's annual Orchid Walk! We had three outstanding volunteers lead groups of interested visitors through the Marl Pond Trail to see the absolutely impressive abundance of orchids and flowering plants of the natural area this spring.

Wagner Natural Area's signature yellow lady's-slippers were beautifully out on display right next to the trail for many of our visitors to see for the very first time. There was also a multitude of round-leaved orchids this year accompanied by the flowering of common labrador tea, bog violets, and saline shooting stars, among others.



Yellow Lady's-Slipper in Wagner Natural Area taken June 13, 2022.

Photo by Sydney Cantu



Round-Leaved Orchid on the Marl Pond Trail taken on June 25, 2022.

Photo by Cheryl Johnson

## Support Us



The Wagner Natural Area Society welcomes new supporters, volunteers, and all people interested in natural history and the preservation of the ecological integrity of this delightful natural area.

### VOLUNTEERS / MEMBERS

People of all talents and interests are desired and welcomed to become more closely involved with the Natural Area and accompanying Society.

Email: [info@wagnerfen.ca](mailto:info@wagnerfen.ca)

### DONATIONS

All donations help maintain the integrity of the Natural Area and its surroundings, provide educational material, enhance visitor experiences, and support on-going research studies and surveys.

**Please see page 9 for the donation/volunteer form.**

# RESEARCH:



Two adult Tree Swallows perched on a wire fence taken June 23, 2022.

Photo by Sydney Cantu



Two young Tree Swallows (approx. 12 days old) taken June 23, 2022.

Photo by Sydney Cantu

## Species Highlight of the Month – Tree Swallow, *Tachycineta bicolor*

One of the first sights visitors will see as they enter the Wagner Natural Area is Atim field, an old farmer's field on the northwest corner of the Natural Area. It is also not uncommon to spot a couple tree swallows flying and diving in the air above the field. Their iridescent dark blue backs and angular wings make the birds very distinct from others in Wagner. Or one might be able to identify a tree swallow from their constant chattering twitter if many are around or “cheet-veef” and “silip” calls from individuals.

Tree Swallows are usually found in areas like Wagner that contain open areas for insect foraging and marshes where dead trees are commonplace for nesting. For several decades, Wagner volunteers have maintained a number of nest boxes on fenceposts for the swallows to use each nesting season to lay eggs and raise their young.

Past President Dave Ealey allowed me to help band the young tree swallows that were present in the fence nest boxes and old enough to be banded in Atim field. I had such a fun time being able to experience and examine the process of banding young birds firsthand and actually get to handle a young bird in my own hands for the first time. It was an excitingly formative experience for me this summer and I had a great time learning about banding young birds and data collection.

Work cited: McGillivray, B. W., Semenchuk, G. P. (1998). *The Federation of Alberta Naturalists Field Guide to Alberta Birds*. Federation of Alberta Naturalists.

# RESEARCH:

## May Species Count

### May Count of Plant Species in Flower in Wagner Natural Area, 2022 by Patsy Cotterill

In total, 48 plant species were recorded as being in flower during the period May 28<sup>th</sup> to June 3<sup>rd</sup> this year. Four routes representing a variety of plant communities were undertaken, with open fens and forested fens predominating. This total was similar to the 52 species recorded in 2021, although to an observer covering the same routes year after year, spring flowering this year was discernibly later than last. There were few flowers in evidence overall, showing that lower proportions of species populations had come into flower. Marsh marigold, for instance, which is often past its best by the end of May, had many buds, earning it a rating of 50% flowering rather than a fading one. Yellow lady's-slipper, which would be coming into flower in an early year, was in tight bud, a good sign, since that meant that it would still be flowering during the Father's Day Orchid Walk in June.

Wagner's many sedge species present a complex situation to record, a case of winning some and losing some. Many species are already forming fruit at the time of the Count, but a late spring means that more will still be in flower. Sheathed sedge, with its paintbrush-like male spike, was abundant and conspicuously in flower along the Marl Pond Trail. This year it was possible to catch tufted bulrush, a major component of open fens, in flower. However, two prominent fen sedges, water sedge and prairie sedge, unusually, showed signs of flowering only on the exposed south-facing shore of a large marl lake. Some sedges were plainly having a bad year – two-



Bog violets in flower in Wagner NA, with star-flowered false Solomon's seal to the left, taken June 28, 2022.

Photo by Patsy Cotterill

seeded sedge and bog sedge, both species of hummocks and hollows in black spruce-tamarack woods, were so scarce as to be difficult to find.



(Above) Arrow-leaved coltsfoot in (white) fruit, and marsh marigold, beside a pool in Wagner NA, taken May 29, 2022.

Photo by Patsy Cotterill

The May Count excursions also provide a good opportunity to check on the fortunes of species of interest as well as to monitor communities in Wagner in general. A population of pale coralroot orchid was found in flower in one location but seemed to be absent from other areas where it has been located in previous years. (Yellow lady's-slipper, on the other hand, continues to increase in leaps and bounds.) Of course, subsequent visits to these venues are highly worthwhile to double-check flowering estimates and to see how the picture changes with the advancing season and June rains. Never a dull moment during the peak of the season in Wagner!



(Right) Common Labrador Tea near a boardwalk on the Marl Pond Trail, taken June 6, 2022.

Photo by Sydney Cantu

## May Count of Bird Species in Wagner Natural Area, 2022 by Dave Ealey and Sheila Hale

A late spring by most accounts...late snowmelt...late flowering for marsh marigold, etc., ...didn't, however, show a clear delay in the bird species showing up for the May count. Perhaps the only late migrant that was absent this year was the American goldfinch, but we did find most of the usual species on our list (see Table). Only two survey areas within the Wagner Natural Area were sampled: our usual Marl Pond Trail (MPT) with the nearby beaver pond; and the densely forested habitat adjacent large marl ponds east of the MPT.

In total, 38 species were detected for 192 birds counted. Last year's count had 47 species and 348 birds, but then there were three different survey areas covered in 2021. Both survey areas in 2022 contained birds from 17 species, while the MPT had another 12 species exclusively and the survey area east of the MPT held 9 species not recorded along the trail. From several years of May Species Counts on the natural area, we've discovered the variety of habitats occurring in the natural area yield a variety of species; the more habitat types covered, the more bird species, not surprisingly.

Perhaps the greatest thrill was seeing a high-flying northern goshawk...a rare sighting, though mostly because they are so elusive and usually stick to densely forested areas. A bit of a surprise was the yellow-headed blackbird; not previously recorded by the senior author on the natural area...some digging into the archives will be needed to check for previous records.

It's always fun to see something new and reassuring to see the regular occupants. We've come to expect certain species in their usual places; it's like greeting old friends each year!

Species	Marl Pond Trail and Beaver Pond	Forest and Wetlands East of Marl Pond Trail
Canada Goose	--	Few
Blue-winged Teal	Few	Few
Mallard	Few	Few
Green-winged Teal	--	Few
Wilson's Snipe	Few	Few
Solitary Sandpiper	--	Few
Northern Goshawk	--	Few
Hairy Woodpecker	--	Few

Pileated Woodpecker	--	Few
Least Flycatcher	Few	--
Philadelphia Vireo	--	Few
Warbling Vireo	Few	Few
Red-eyed Vireo	Few	--
Blue Jay	Few	--
Black-billed Magpie		Few
American Crow	Few	Few
Common Raven	Few	Few
Black-capped Chickadee	Few	Few
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	Few	Few
White-breasted Nuthatch	Few	Few
House Wren	Few	Few
American Robin	Common	Few
Purple Finch	Few	--
Pine Siskin	Common	--
Chipping Sparrow	Common	Common
Clay-colored Sparrow	Common	Few
White-throated Sparrow	Common	Few
Le Conte's Sparrow	Few	--
Lincoln's Sparrow	Few	--
Swamp Sparrow	Few	Few
Song Sparrow	Few	--
Yellow-headed Blackbird	Few	Few
Red-winged Blackbird	--	Few
Brown-headed Cowbird	Common	Few
Tennessee Warbler	Few	--
Common Yellowthroat	Few	--
Yellow Warbler	Few	Few
Yellow-rumped Warbler	Common	Few

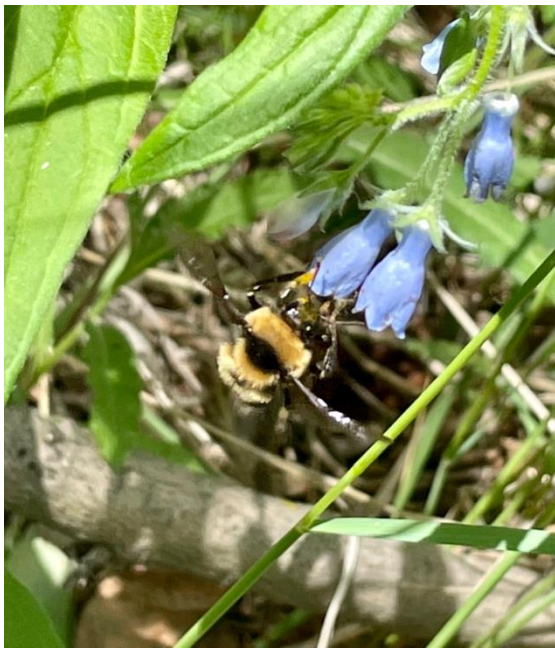
Few: 1 to 5 birds; Common: 6 to 19 birds; Abundant: >20 birds

# BOARD BULLETIN:

## Letter from President Cheryl Johnson –

Happy July! School is out and families are looking for happy, healthy places to visit; hopefully, they take a walk at Wagner. I was fortunate enough to accompany one of our volunteer naturalists on the Orchid Walk on Father's Day and felt blessed to see an abundance of orchids and other blooming plants (and a whole lot of mosquitoes). With all our rain and a bit of sunshine, everything is growing like mad, and it's good to see our wetlands replenished. School groups had begun to return to field tripping after the pandemic had let up, and we thank Sydney for her hard work in guiding those young people. One of our goals is to increase our diversity in visitorship, and we were able to present to a group of newcomers in Edmonton who we hope will make the trip out west to see our special natural area. All in all, we look forward to a great summer!

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A bumblebee searching for nectar in a Tall Lungwort plant, taken June 2, 2022.

Photo by Sydney Cantu



Alberta Wild Rose on the southern border of the natural area

Photo by Cheryl Johnson

## MEMBERSHIP – WAGNER NATURAL AREA SOCIETY

### Support / Donate / Volunteer

More information on Wagner Natural Area or Society, field trips and other activities, go to [wagnerfen.ca](http://wagnerfen.ca).

Wagner Natural Area is a Registered Charity. Donations will help maintain this very special area; \$20 or more are receipted for Income Tax purposes, CRA B/N119287522 RR 0001

Society's annual fee is \$10 for Supporting Members and \$15 for Voting Members. Voting Members are key to run WNAS; must qualify through nomination. See website. The Society's fiscal year is January 1 to December 31.

Annual fee (Supporting \$10/Voting 15): \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Donation: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

May the Society CONTACT you by: **EMAIL: Yes / No**

**PHONE: Yes / No**

**Email Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

If you can VOLUNTEER to help with the Society with maintenance of the Natural Area (circle): **Yes**

**Name(s):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Mailing Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

Mail this form with cheque/money order, payable to Wagner Natural Area Society, to:  
Treasurer, Wagner Natural Area Society, 30531-118 Ave., Acheson, AB T7X 6M5

Or scan the completed form and pay online. Submit your membership/donation by Interac bank transfer to [treasurer@wagnerfen.ca](mailto:treasurer@wagnerfen.ca)

[June 2022]

## MYCOLOGY OF WAGNER



Tinder Fungus (*Fomes fomentarius*)



Red Capped Scaber Stalk (*Leccinum aurantiacum*)



Spring Fieldcap (*Agrocybe praecox*)

Photos by Sydney Cantu